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UFO wars: Europe vs. America

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EDITORIAL

Whither American ufology?

Mark Rodeghier

Is American ufology infused with paranoia? Jerome Clark addressed that question in his editorial in the previous issue of *IUR*. He concluded that it is but that a "certain degree of paranoia is inevitable" in these bewildering times.

The reader will find another discussion of American ufology in this issue. The authors, two well-known Italian researchers, consider the differences between European and American ufology and even suggest that American ufology is heading in a "dangerous" direction. By this they mean that our focus on abduction cases, alleged government cover-ups and the Gulf Breeze events leads us away from what is considered the "real" UFO phenomenon by European ufologists. Moreover, if I read them correctly, Edoardo Russo and Gian Paolo Grassino believe American ufology to be somewhat irrational in its concern with areas of the UFO phenomenon in which evidence is problematic and in great dispute.

I do not wish to confront the views of Russo and Grassino directly in this editorial; Jerome Clark does that ably in a rejoinder to their piece. Instead I intend to use their position as a springboard for some remarks on the current state of American ufology. Is it in trouble, even dangerously so? If not, why this perception held by our overseas colleagues?

There is a dirty little secret that is either ignored or, worse, misrepresented by most ufologists. The "secret" is discouraging only to those whose opinion on the nature of the UFO phenomenon is set in concrete. The secret is simply that the number of UFO reports has dropped enormously since the late 1970s, and this is true worldwide. Data I have seen from the United States, France, the United Kingdom and Spain confirm that, in general, reports have dropped by about 80 percent. Never fear: UFOs, whatever they are, have not gone away. All the major groups still get reports, and the *National Enquirer* finds reports sufficient to fill its pages.

This dramatic decrease in reports, though, has meant that ufologists have had the leisure, as it were, to look at other aspects of the UFO phenomenon than the raw data from sightings. What has happened is that American and foreign ufologists have reacted differently to this opportunity. Americans have turned to abduction reports and questions of cover-ups; foreign ufologists have, for the most part, turned to sociopsychological theories to explain why the UFO phenomenon is not, in actuality, a physical phenomenon, or they have promoted geophysical theories which, at the least, deny any intelligent control of the UFO phenomenon.

Before suggesting why Americans and the rest of the world have diverged, I should note that American ufologists hardly act as one monolithic army marching in lockstep. For the past 10 years Michael Persinger (a Canadian, though born in the U.S.) and John Derr (an American) have been refining their tectonic-strain theory, which is a sophisticated version of the earthlight ideas of British ufologists. Some ufologists in the U.S., including me, have not concluded that abduction reports are irrefutable proof that aliens are interfering with human life. Others, such as Barry Greenwood, have presented sensible inquiries into concealed U.S. government interest in UFOs without falling victim to the wild rumors of government conspiracies with aliens that I hear all too frequently.

Yet given the above, it is true that most active American ufologists (and the public) are, indeed, intensely interested in abductions, cover-ups and attractive color photographs of alleged alien spacecraft.

Let's consider the cover-up question first. There is an obvious structural reason that explains why Americans have become so wrapped up in the search for evidence of secret government UFO projects: the Freedom of Information Act (FOIA). No other country in the world has passed legislation that allows the public such sweeping access to government records. By comparison England not only has no FOIA but continues to prosecute authors for revealing facts that are public knowledge everywhere but in the U.K. Once the FOIA was strengthened in 1974, it was only natural that Americans would use it to look into secret government UFO activities. After all, the U.S. had an official UFO project for 22 years, and it had long been rumored that, even during the days of Project Blue Book, some reports had bypassed the usual channels. (Before he died, Allen Hynek told me of several such instances known to him personally.)

It was therefore only logical for Americans to use the FOIA to pursue UFO data, but another reason soon surfaced: requests for UFO documents were successful. In the past 13 years we have unearthed hundreds of pages of documents which confirm a U.S. interest in UFO reports, despite official denials. Europeans could not duplicate these feats, though some have tried, notably

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Ufology in Europe; or, what is America coming to?

by Edoardo Russo and Gian Paolo Grassino

Edoardo Russo, editor of *Ufologia* and *Italian UFO Reporter*, is a founding member of the Italian Center for UFO Studies (Centro Italiano Studi Ufologici) and has been active in ufology since 1977. His articles have appeared in American and European UFO publications. Gian Paolo Grassino is coeditor of *Clypeus-Ufologica*, coeditor-in-chief of the journal *UFO — Rivista di Informazione Ufologica* and coordinator of the Italian UFO Data Bank. Both Russo and Grassino are residents of Turin. A somewhat different version of this paper, originally a lecture delivered to the First European Congress on Anomalous Aerial Phenomena (held in Belgium in November 1988), has been published in England's *Magonia*. Jerome Clark's response begins on page 8.

These days Europe is a fashionable concept as everybody dreams of 1993, when the European Community will come to real life. Where does that leave us European ufologists? Does a European ufology really exist? Will a Ufological Europe soon exist? If you look at what is published in UFO journals and bulletins around the continent, you may easily answer no. Differences are everywhere apparent.

The language barrier is a major reason. Out of 18 West European countries, as many as 14 different languages are spoken, and often local ufologists are unable to understand other languages than their own. Also historical differences may be easily found. Some national ufologies have had a leading role, often because their languages were widely spoken all around the world (France and Great Britain) and more intense exchanges helped them to keep an international view of the UFO problem and research. Others remained more closed upon themselves, either as to input or as to output, and their contribution has been small (or at least little-known abroad).

The last is the case in Italy, but it may become a good vantage point from which to view worldwide UFO research without the distorting lens of national chauvinism.

Specific national areas of interest exist for given periods of time. For example, sky-watching was ubiquitous in the United Kingdom in the 1960s, in France and Italy in the '70s, in Scandinavia in the '80s. The Ummo issue has had little impact on non-Spanish ufologies; humanistic ufology was peculiar to small British groups in the early '70s. The earthlight debate has barely passed British boundaries. Even specific UFO/IFO types may be found: the lighted toy-balloons are said to cause as many as 31 percent of German sightings in the last 12 years (and very few UFO landings are reported from that country), while an epidemic of "laser-beams" has manifested all over Italy in the last few years. French contactees look very different from the Italian ones, and if you consider UFO abductions around Europe you will find very different situations where both quantity and quality of reports are concerned.

Our purpose here is to show that, aside from all above-mentioned (and other) differences and specificities, European national ufologies do already have something in common. To understand it, we will contrast it with American ufology (by "America" we mean the USA).

We wish to emphasize that our intention is not to criticize American ufologists, because we greatly respect their work. (Indeed you might say that we Italian ufologists have always been and still are quite America-dependent). So we beg their pardon for using them in what will sometimes possibly look like a contentious way, but we do this solely for the sake of the argument.

The historical role of American ufology

Indeed the UFO phenomenon was born in America, back in 1947, and only later was it "imported" to Europe, where the first real UFO sightings wave was that of 1950. Some Italian ufologists even (jokingly) say that flying saucers arrived to Europe as part of the Marshall Plan, along with chewing gum, rock 'n' roll music and all those American imports that have flooded our shores since we became a province of the Empire.

And ufology itself was undisputably born in the USA. Any history of ufology must include such classic names as Arnold, Mantell, Keyhoe, Lorenzen, Ruppelt, APRO, NICAP and so on. And where else could you find Project Blue Book, UFOCAT, MUFON and CUFOS?

Americans have always led the way toward a scientific ufology: Jacques Vallee and J. Allen Hynek with their terminology and classification systems, as well as computerized analysis. At the same time the first opposition to the ETH was voiced by American authors such as John Keel and again Vallee. Think of anything in the '50s and '60s, and the USA led the way, while Europe

contributed little more than Aime Michel and *Flying Saucer Review*.

Even as the UFO phenomenon itself evolved, it seemed to do so within the USA. The daylight discs arrived there in 1947, the contactees in the early '50s, the "soft" and physical close encounters of the late '60s, the abductee epidemics of the mid-'70s. Tellingly, the 1958-1964 period is sometimes called the "dark age" because of the lull in American UFO sightings, even if great waves occurred at the same time in Europe and South America.

In a word, America was the reference mark and a sort of ideal country for ufologists all around the world. If something had to happen, it was there.

What about Europe?

At that point something began to change. It may have been on the "scientific ufology" side (since 1977 France led the way, thanks to the civilian scientific study of UFOs by GEPAN); but we believe it may be better traced in the different consequences of "paraphysical" ufology.

While Keel and Vallee may have appeared to be unheard voices in America (where the predominance of the extraterrestrial hypothesis has never been seriously questioned by UFO students), they were widely listened to by the European intellectuals, especially in Great Britain and France. In due course the whole national scene was affected in those two countries.

For example, England's *MUFOB* (now *Magonia*) team picked up the message quite clearly. The humanistic turn it gave to what was then called the "new ufology" was later amplified by popular authors such as Jenny Randles, who in turn gradually influenced a whole generation of British ufologists, to a point that now it's rare to find "true believers" in alien spaceships among the best known and most active UFO investigators in the UK.

As another example, Vallee's influence (especially via *The Invisible College*) pushed French ufology in the mid-'70s into the parapsychological (Pierre Vieroudy, Jean-Jacques Jaillat, Jean Giraud) and this in turn had a major effect upon the sudden change of mind of Michel Monnerie and the other *nouvelles ufologues* who in the late '70s turned abruptly to skepticism. Their time passed, but not before ensuring that a new generation of French ufologists was no longer committed to believing but to maintaining an open-minded stance which enhanced the subject's scientific credibility.

Of course there were revisionist winds blowing in America at the same time which was around 1980. Examples include books and papers by Allan Hendry, Richard Haines and Alvin Lawson, and even the *MUFON UFO Journal* published skeptical articles by CSICOP members such as James Oberg. But it was a different "revisionism," less ideological and more pragmatic — a matter whose significance we shall examine shortly.

Indeed, some differences between the two sides of the Atlantic were quite apparent as early as 1980, and not only in ufology. You have no doubt read or heard the "American Empire" (as a cultural concept) is in crisis. We don't know for sure if that's true, since we are not sociologists. But somehow the American model is no longer irresistible. (An interesting example may be the European juvenile subculture since, say, 1977, when there was quite a break after several decades of strong dependence on America.)

What about the American model of ufology? As we said, up to a certain point, the USA and Europe followed the same path, let's say the same "escalation of hypotheses": from Martian scoutships to interstellar travelers, from ETH to paraphysical issues, from flying saucers to UFOs (and IFOs, too).

But no longer — something has broken down. Since 1987 it looks as if the circle of history has closed upon itself and ufology has gone back to square one, with a difference: Europe left on a tangent while America is stepping onto the same merry-go-round.

Let's explain what we mean.

American ufology now

Whitley Strieber's *Communion*, Budd Hopkins' alien abductors, Gary Kinder's book about the Swiss contactee Billy Meier, the "cosmic cover-up" of MJ-12, the Gulf Breeze photo-repeater case: we Europeans stand bewildered and astonished as American ufology seems to be reentering the 1950s.

Here are again those noisy contactees (now abductees); a new kind of George Adamski nurturing endless controversy about his wonderful yet unbelievable "scoutship" pictures; ufologists crying "government cover-up"; and all those American sounds we've heard before. Moreover, Americans are debating matters for which we have no parallel here. In Europe you find no saucer crashes, few abductions (except perhaps in the U.K.), smaller government cover-ups. Could you imagine the Italian government's successfully trying to conceal *anything*?

But is the past really being repeated? Not exactly. This time things are on a different level. Those who are investigating cover-ups have a powerful instrument, the Freedom of Information Act. Now it's no longer a question of the Air Force's debunking the UFO reality; now it's the President's establishing a Majestic-12 group which not only knows UFOs are real but has the corpses to prove it. This time it's no longer simply examining Adamski's photos through the magnifying lens; now we have sophisticated photoanalysis techniques confirming Gulf Breeze pictures; contactees' evidence is no longer an alien pancake but odd body scars and ghost pregnancies.

Times have changed, of course, and everything is up

to date in the '80s. The "first generation" ETH was good for accounting for daylight discs in the '50s. But now that there are no more UFO reports, you don't even need a trigger-sighting, not even a time-lapse: you need nothing more than a vague fear for suspecting a suppressed alien abduction memory!

At the same time, European ufologists seem to follow very different lines of search, as you may read in most Old World UFO journals.

In Europe the principal difference between the '50s and the '80s is, we believe, that whereas then ufologists "knew" the truth about the saucers, now we are no longer so sure. Early ufologists were not so much researchers as they were public educators trying to persuade people of the reality of alien spacecraft. How many investigation reports dating back from the '50s can be found in your files? Most "classic" cases are to be found only in books and UFO-zines, but rarely do they include those data that today we require from any investigator. (And yet, if we can judge from some recent pieces of investigative work, some American colleagues have forgotten everything Hendry, Haines and Fowler taught about field-investigation methodology.)

Another major feature of the "new" European ufology is that we no longer consider IFOs "false UFOs." Indeed IFOs have become a conceptual reality in Europe and are acknowledged as a part of the problem, whereas our overseas colleagues still regard them as little more than products for the dust-bin: identify and eliminate them.

How do you explain it?

So it seems as if we have two ufologies, as Jenny Randles recently put it: an American one, concentrating almost exclusively on abduction reports, UFO crashes and government cover-ups, and a European one, more concerned with IFOs and human sciences.

How could it happen? We cannot blame the language barrier. It's true that most American ufologists cannot read other languages, but they can always read the British authors. And anyway *we* can read them and still can follow them, but we have stopped doing so and gone our own way.

In fact the basic attitudes of American and European ufologists toward each other do not differ much from the average man's attitudes. Americans tend to think Europeans are much too complicated in their abstract reasoning, with their noses up to the sky instead of being pragmatic in their approach to reality. And Europeans tend to think of Americans as gullible, naive, superficial people, unable to see behind appearances. Of course such stereotyped images are crude and inadequate, but they nonetheless contain a grain of truth. The practical (pragmatic) culture of Americans as opposed to the more theoretical European one is reflected by the difference between some "revisionist" authors such as Richard Haines and Allan Hendry, there, and Jenny Randles and the French "new wave," here. And often we can well understand some American colleagues' impatience for what does look like groundless cerebral elucubrations.

That problem is well illustrated by recent statements by Budd Hopkins to the effect that "we don't need abduction theoriticians, but abduction investigators: come and do the hard work instead of philosophizing from your comfortable armchairs." It's true; it would be good for some UFO philosophers to get involved in field investigations and "touch" the phenomenon. On the other hand, it would be naive to go interviewing witnesses without a careful background training, unless you seek no more than easy confirmation of your own beliefs.

Ironically, abduction researchers, who refute any psychological implication for "their" percipients, seem to be unaware that they're involving themselves (and their percipients, alas) in that same sociopsychological garbage that they claim is contaminating the brains of their European colleagues.

The different role played by the mass media in the USA and in Europe may also be relevant. Media attitudes toward people and people's attitudes toward media seem strikingly different. For example, we are told Americans are fond of seeing their names in the local newspaper, while Italians recoil from the prospect. And the media treatment was probably the cause of the great success of Whitley Strieber's *Communion* in America — and its cold reception in Europe.

We also think that it's significant that Americans say there has been a sightings lull since 1973 or so. That would explain why you have to resort to:

- alleged crashes which took place back 40 years ago;
- "invisible epidemics" of abduction cases without conscious UFO sightings;
- bedroom visitors once kept outside any UFO-report catalogue or file (remember Bloecher-Webb's CE-III class E: no UFO seen in correlation with entity);
- numerous reports (and photos) from a single "repeater" witness (Ed of Gulf Breeze, or Billy Meier of Switzerland; what's the difference?).

Abductions seem to mark the final separation, in that they have become *the* American ufology. They undoubtedly constitute the highest-strangeness reports, but do they deserve such obsessive attention? Are we sure that a solution to the UFO enigma may come only from the study of such alleged alien kidnappings?

What are we to do of such intrinsically unstudiable things as Hopkins' intruders? There is no proof or direct evidence; the intruders totally control the situation. At this point we can only either wait for contact or arm ourselves and watch the skies or conclude (with Charles

Fort) that "we're property" or already "colonized" and retire ourselves from ufology a la Aime Michel.

Will the day come when no common assumptions link the two sides of the Atlantic? In at least two areas this may well be the case:

- *The social level.* A different public has different interests (consider the example of *Communion*) and a different view of the phenomenon and its students;
- *The ufologists themselves.* Think of Hopkins. Doesn't he, too, look for a "different" UFO experience: hypnosis-created instead of investigated?

Who is right?

On the other side, our American friends might well ask us what we are talking about and conclude that indeed *we* are no longer ufologists, and they may be right, since we no longer study what most of them mean by "UFO." (But are they really studying UFOs or are they really in pursuit of alien spacecraft they disingenuously hide behind the more scientific-sounding "UFO" label?)

In a certain sense, there are also similarities between present American and European avant-garde ufologists: UFO sightings are just the proverbial tip of the iceberg both for American abduction researchers and for the European sociopsychological "new ufologists." But those are different icebergs: the first is a massive genetic-testing campaign by alien intruders, the second is just one facet of a multifaceted "modern folklore" phenomenon.

So we see the emergence of two different models of ufology, two concepts of reality.

Well, you ask, where's the problem? It's you who said each national UFO community has its own concept of ufology. So what?

What we wish to emphasize is a danger: We Europeans and you Americans are beginning to go in opposite directions. To us it appears that you are going down a dangerous road to an unknown destination. You have already rehabilitated contactees, though in a new form, so that they are now accepted (and promoted) by ufologists, who even believe they act in a scientific manner. (Who can disagree with Philip J. Klass when he remarks that Hopkins' concept of "skepticism" is so broad that it cannot refute anything?)

Linguists tell us that in 100 years the Americans and the British will be speaking mutually incomprehensible varieties of English. Even now Americans and British, along with other Europeans, see mutually exclusive UFO realities. Indeed, while we express our astonishment at the recent American developments, our overseas friends don't seem able to cope up with our criticism and try only to exorcise us as "debunkers of a new kind." But that's wrong. We are not "negative believers" of the CSICOP kind.

It seems difficult to explain to America that European UFO research has evolved to a point where there is no longer a black-and-white battlecamp between the goodies (us believers) and the bad guys (those debunkers); more and more often you may find ufologists who hold very different ideological positions living and working together without just trying to bite each other. Indeed, it's only tolerance for different opinions, and none of us should feel entitled to possess "the Truth"; we're all searching for answers, and we've not yet got them.

And here lies the hopeful solution: a greater tolerance for one another's opinions. Are we prepared to understand that ufology itself may be influenced by sociological differences and so it is legitimate that each one has its own kind of ufology?

The way ahead

Even if in reality such extreme opposition as we have painted may not exist, its representation has served, we hope, to see ourselves more clearly. A conclusion we feel entitled to reach is that a European ufology already exists *de facto*, because of a common substratum of *modus operandi* and style of reasoning which are different from the American. A different course of history in the last 15 years left its mark, and European ufologists are now ideologically nearer to each other and more distant from their American counterpoints.

We can no longer expect America to show us the way, and we no longer have that importing channel at work across the Atlantic. Indeed we in Europe, whether we realize it or not, now have our own ufology. ■

Coming in *IUR*...

The trouble with UNICAT
by Paul Fuller

CE3 and possible landing traces
by Ann Druffel

Why Ed is not Billy Meier
by Bruce Maccabee

How to make your own Gulf Breeze photos
by Wim van Utrecht

UFOs in science fiction
by Chris Rutkowski

Two cheers for American ufology

by Jerome Clark

Jerome Clark is the editor of *IUR* and vice president of CUFOS.

Edoardo Russo, Gian Paolo Grassino and (elsewhere in this issue) Paul Devereux draw our attention to a fact of which most American ufologists are unaware: that their European colleagues are coming to very different conclusions about the nature of the UFO phenomenon. The typical American ufologist, I have found, is unread even in the writings of the most prominent British theorists (Hilary Evans, for example) and has never heard the term "psychosocial hypothesis," much less knows what it means. In fact, several years ago, when *IUR* published an article by Evans on a 19th-Century medium-contactee, several readers protested; from their remarks it was clear that their reaction was untouched by the slightest understanding of what he was saying, which was not — as our correspondents thought — that it is possible to communicate psychically with disembodied Martians.

But it is one thing for our European friends to complain that they are not being heard — in this, sadly, their grievance is all too well-founded — and it is quite another to charge (as one well-known writer has) that American ufology has fallen victim to "mass madness" or that (as an overwrought Paul Devereux has it in our "Letters" section) the situation in America is akin to "Salem at the height of the witch-hunting hysteria." This is not only nonsense but, worse, self-serving nonsense of the type that keeps one from having to deal with difficult issues.

Russo and Grassino are much closer to the mark when they write that basic American pragmatism shapes Americans' approach to the UFO phenomenon. Unfortunately, they fail to explore the implications of that observation, which they state and then, for all practical purposes, abandon. Nowhere in their paper is it explained *why* American ufologists have come to the specific concerns and conclusions that have dominated their outlook for the past decade. Reading Russo and Grassino (and Devereux), one could only conclude — if, of course, one did not know better — that Americans take the ETH (and abductions, cover-ups and crashed-disc claims) seriously only because they are eccentric, reactionary and unwilling to heed wise counsel from the Old World. Not a word is said here about something that, for want of a better word, we Americans call "evidence" and in which, I think, we take a rather deeper interest than some of our critics.

Before I delve further into that issue, however, a brief look at the last two decades of American ufology is in order. If my own long experience in American ufology is any guide, Russo and Grassino are wrong when they characterize John Keel and Jacques Vallee as "unheard voices" crying in the wilderness of their country's ufology. It is certainly true that the "new ufology" — also known as (what a wretched term!) "paraphysical ufology" — never affected the Old Guardians of NICAP and APRO, except to irritate them, but it did have a larger domestic following than Russo and Grassino realize. I should know, having written one of the basic texts, the phenomenally silly *The Unidentified* (1975), and having in those days extensive contacts with just about every active ufologist who took such notions seriously. There were more than a few of us.

As I have written elsewhere ("The Fall and Rise of the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis," *MUFON 1988 UFO Symposium Proceedings*), the new ufology had its roots in the counterculture of the late 1960s-early '70s and in the Fortean tradition. Vallee was, at least intellectually, a product of the former, Keel of the latter. Whereas Vallee was cool and reflective, Keel was hotheaded and anti-intellectual (more, in fact, like the crankish Tiffany Thayer, founder of the Fortean Society, than like the puckish Charles Fort); but despite many differences the two shared a suspicion of science. In Vallee's case it was not science generally, just science as applied to understanding transcendental phenomena, which is what he believed UFOs were; Keel, on the other hand, loathed eggheads generally, and scientists are nothing if not eggheads.

The books Vallee and Keel wrote reflected their differing temperaments and cultural loyalties, but they had in common a rejection of the extraterrestrial hypothesis in favor of an anything-goes, wild-blue-yonder ascent into the speculative stratosphere. Keel's books have a shrill, nasty edge, a breathless credulity and a pulpish sensibility (*Saga*, for which Keel wrote most frequently, and he were well-suited) and their charms, if ever they had them, faded long ago. More interesting, for all their failings, are Vallee's three new-ufological books. By far the best of them is the first, *Passport to Magonia* (1969).

It should be remembered (although it isn't) that in the introduction to *Passport* (also the first book by anybody of significance to adopt a new-ufological perspective) Vallee candidly admits that he has fallen

under the spell of arational impulses: "I entirely forgot that I was a scientist by profession when I began the manuscript of *Passport to Magonia*. My only guide has been the persistent feeling that science had offered no answer to some basic needs in our hearts, and that perhaps the present loneliness of man, echoed in the great miseries of times past, had provided most of the emotional power, most of the intellectual quality, mobilized in that unreachable goal: Magonia — a place where gentle folks and graceful fairies dance, and lament the coarse world below." It is possible, actually hard not, to read these words as a warning that what follows is no more than a kind of sentimental countercultural whimsy. Which is precisely what *Passport* turns out to be. If you doubt it, go to Vallee's sources, the great folklore surveys of Keightley, Evans-Wentz and others, and see firsthand Vallee's freewheeling, selective (i.e., nonscholarly) use of the material therein (comparable in some ways to Velikovsky's [mis]use of source material, except that one is more likely to forgive the playful Vallee than the messianic Velikovsky). In fairness it must be said *Passport* is also a delightful, elegantly-written work; but it is a literary exercise, not in *any* sense a disciplined analysis.

Vallee's subsequent books, *The Invisible College* (1975) and *Messengers of Deception* (1979), are not without a certain appalling fascination but are, by any sober standard, godawful. If *Passport* showed where the unfettered imagination can soar, its sequels offered painful evidence of what happens when imagination fails and plummets to earth, landing — as such descents so often do — in paranoid country. *College* and *Messengers* are eccentric even as conspiracy-theory books go, and even less coherent. Most readers of my acquaintance still don't know exactly what Vallee was trying to say, although the message that We Are Being Manipulated by some illuminati-like group does seem clear enough. Israeli magician Uri Geller, whom Vallee apparently regarded as a genuine psychokineticist, is involved in some way, evidently, and so for a time was a "Major Murphy," Vallee's chief "informant," later acknowledged not to exist(!). Vallee also delves clumsily into the contactee movement, connecting it somehow to the conspiracy. My friend J. Gordon Melton, a much-published religious historian and contactee expert, once remarked to me that, if Vallee had read one book on the sociology of religion, he would have been spared the trouble of writing either *College* or *Messengers*.

All this notwithstanding, Vallee is an intelligent, interesting man who, when he was not forgetting he is a scientist, wrote valuable books on ufology (*Anatomy of a Phenomenon* [1965] and *Challenge to Science* [1966] are still two of the finest works on the subject). If it were a crime to write bad books, Vallee and a lot of other people (including me) would be serving time. My point is not to embarrass Vallee by bringing up books he may as heartily wish to forget as I would like to forget my own, but simply to state that any "intellectual" movement that reveres (and traces itself back to) *College*, et al, and *The Unidentified* (still praised in *Magonia*, the new ufology's premier journal, and by Hilary Evans no less) is in trouble.

One of the new ufology's many problems was that it took a skewed view of the phenomenon it purported to examine. Its focus was typically on the most extreme claims — men in black, Mothman and other monsters, wild contactee yarns — many of them subjective or visionary, not a few made by individuals of dubious sincerity or sanity, others representing perhaps authentic (if not necessarily UFO-related) anomalies — which were uniformly unverifiable. No wonder "evidence" became irrelevant; there wasn't any. Worse, these extreme claims misrepresented the UFO phenomenon as a whole, if they had anything to do with the UFO phenomenon at all. Yet new ufologists were quick to declare that the subjective, nonevidential character of the extreme claims proved that UFOs, any kind of UFOs, are (1) "jealous" (that is, directed in such a way as to prevent our ever getting good evidence of their existence), (2) "psychic" or (3) nonexistent in any objective sense (in other words, hallucinatory).

As critics in the debunking community hastened to note with unabashed glee, the labeling of UFOs as a "jealous" phenomenon sounded very much like special pleading, a desperate effort to save a phenomenon in the absence of evidence for its existence. They were right. It is much easier, and surely more logical, to jump to point (3), as later new ufologists were to do, if that is all there is to it. Early new ufologists openly embraced what they believed to be parapsychological interpretations of UFO phenomena; in so doing, however, they went far beyond even parapsychology's (still-disputed) conclusions about the nature and range of ESP and psychokinetic effects. In any case, it was unwise for ufologists, already burdened with more baggage than they could carry, blithely to pick up parapsychologists' heavy luggage as well. Later new ufologists have maintained a more ambiguous, now-you-see-it-now-you-don't relationship with parapsychology. Parapsychologists themselves, with a few exceptions (notably D. Scott Rogo and Berthold Eric Schwarz, both mavericks within an otherwise staid, conservative, academic parapsychological establishment), have either kept their distance or offered but the faintest of sympathy in reviews of Evans' books.

The later books of Vallee and Keel (such as the latter's ranting *Eighth Tower* [1975]) did much to end American ufology's excursion into Magonian realms, since no sensible person could imagine any defense of them. By the late 1970s, in fact within a year of *The Unidentified*'s publication, I for one (and I think my response was typical) had lapsed into agnosticism about any UFO hypothesis.

In 1977 veteran ufologist Leonard H. Stringfield

published an old-fashioned, rip-snorting book entitled *Situation Red, The UFO Siege!*, with a foreward by no less than Maj. Donald E. Keyhoe. Keyhoe praises Stringfield for making a "valuable contribution toward ending the long Air Force censorship." Words like this had not been heard in quite a while. *Situation Red* was in all ways but one like the great American UFO books of the 1950s. The one way in which it was unalike was in its author's willingness to consider tales of crashed discs. Until then no one, not even the most committed proponent of extraterrestrial visitation and official knowledge of same, had gone this far; even 2 1/2 decades after *Behind the Flying Saucers* (1950), Frank Scully's account of a fictional crash in Aztec, New Mexico, in 1948 — one of the most notorious hoaxes in UFO history — remained a festering wound.

There was, and is, much to criticize about Stringfield's handling of these stories, and I probably did more criticizing than anybody as one of ufology's most vocal critics of crash claims. Several of Stringfield's informants (once their identities became known, through independent sources since Stringfield has long insisted on keeping his own sources anonymous) turned out to be unreliable, and in general Stringfield has been less critical-minded than he should be. Nonetheless it is to his credit that he was at least open-minded enough to listen and to consider the possible merits of what seemed to most an outrageous heresy. Subsequent events may not have vindicated him on all (or perhaps even most) cases, but he turns out to have been prescient in sensing — even before the evidence was available — that the crash question was worth raising anew.

Even as the question of crashed discs was being raised, Project Blue Book's files were being opened and ufologists were beginning to make use of the Freedom of Information Act. The effect of this was to redirect attention from the extreme claims that had so obsessed the new ufologists to the UFO phenomenon as traditionally understood and experienced. As ufologists read the official documents concerning radar-visual and other cases, it became apparent that the UFO evidence was indeed a great deal more compelling than the new ufologists were claiming. The silvery disc-shaped objects that Air Force pilots were chasing and locking onto their radars appeared a lot more technological than visionary, and they certainly did not seem to be anything constructed on earth. It was no wonder that so many who experienced these events, and so many (whether military personnel, scientists or ufologists) who investigated them firsthand, had deemed extraterrestrial incursion a possible explanation of these events. No wonder that the best cases, even when scrutinized by the skeptical inquirers of the Condon Committee, even when enormous amounts of information were available (in other words, when no pleas about "insufficient data" could be credibly copped), resisted conventional accounting.

Furthermore, throughout the 1970s and into the '80s, as the field grew more professionalized, ufologists conducted in-depth investigations of evidential cases such as the McMinnville photograph and the New Zealand film (Bruce Maccabee), the Coyne encounter (Jennie Zeidman), the Delphos traces (Ted Phillips and, later, Erol Faruk), the Stonehenge CE3 (Ted Bloecher and Budd Hopkins), the Ocala radar/visual episode (Allan Hendry) and others. These cases all withstood debunking attempts and continue to impress and to puzzle. There is nothing "jealous" or IFO-like about them — or, for that matter, about the UFO landing traces that figure in the Trans-en-Provence CE2, investigated in the field and in the laboratory by GEPAN, the French government's official UFO-study project.

In the mid-1970s William Moore and Stanton Friedman embarked on their investigation of an alleged UFO crash near Corona, New Mexico, in July 1947. Eventually they found nearly 100 informants who had been involved, directly or indirectly, in the event. (Unfortunately, the premature publication of their findings, while the investigation was still in progress, in Moore and Charles Berlitz's schizophrenic *The Roswell Incident* [1980] provided their critics with an excuse to ignore the considerable strength of the case, presented far more substantively in Moore's paper in the *MUFON 1985 UFO Symposium Proceedings*.) Since then others, journalists and ufologists (including, currently, Don Schmitt of CUFOS), have continued the investigation, going to the site, reinterviewing persons originally contacted by Moore and Friedman, and finding new sources both military and civilian. The evidence that has come to light through all these labors is overwhelming, and no critic (except by misrepresenting that evidence) has been able to touch it. (See, for example, Moore's "Phil Klass and the Roswell Incident: The Skeptics Deceived" [July/August 1986 *IUR*], a devastating refutation of a would-be debunking published in Spring 1986 *Skeptical Inquirer*.) The more we learn about the event, in fact, the more extraordinary it turns out to be.

American ufologists were not indulging in reactionary instincts, credulity or irrationality in following where the evidence led them. Until someone can demonstrate rationally (the sorts of ad-hominem attacks to which American ufologists have been subjected on this issue do not count as rational arguments) that the evidence is flawed or that we are misreading it, we need not pay attention to our critics. As Thomas E. Bullard says later in this issue, in another context, the ball is still in their court, gathering cobwebs.

Let us turn now to some arguments specific to Russo and Grassino's paper.

To start with, in common with all European new ufologists whose writings I have read, Russo and Grassino make the mistake of confusing contactees and abductees. Contactees have always loomed large in the works of new ufologists and figured prominently even in

the early works of Keel and Vallee, who believed they and their claims deserved to be taken as seriously as any other claims in which UFOs played a role. Russo and Grassino make the same quantum jump Evans, Keith Basterfield and Robert E. Bartholomew have made; the former do it in the simple phrase "those noisy contactees (now abductees)."

No, contactees are not "now abductees." Contactees continue to be contactees and if you want to get a sense of what they are like (which is not very much like abductees), I urge you to attend Leo Sprinkle's annual summer conference on the campus of the University of Wyoming in Laramie. (Or you can read my three-part series on the modern movement, "Waiting for the Space Brothers," *Fate*, March-May 1986.) The contactee movement continues in an unbroken line from the late 1940s to the present, different perhaps only in that most of the flamboyant figures of the 1950s (Adamski, van Tassel, Bethurum) having long ago gone on to their rewards, the incidence of fraud is rarer, though contactees are still viewed disdainfully by nearly all American ufologists; Billy Meier, a latter-day Adamski, has no significant constituency outside contactee circles. Most modern contactees do not claim to have had physical encounters (it is a rule of thumb that any contactee who produces photographs of aliens and spaceships is a bald-faced liar) but to communicate psychically (via what is now called channeling) with assorted Space Brothers and Sisters. Contactees now as then are longtime spiritual seekers who dabbled in occultism and pop metaphysics before their contact experiences, in which they received messages from windy ETs telling them what they already knew or suspected. The kind of occult visionary religion of which the contactee movement is a subset is several centuries old and is discussed in detail in Melton's *The Encyclopedia of American Religions*, Volume II (1978, first edition), chapters 16 and 17.

The abduction phenomenon is something else. Those of us who have studied the contactee movement (about which few ufologists, new or old, know much) find it interesting but not especially mysterious. Its psychological and theological roots are readily apparent, and it is infinitely more reminiscent of Spiritualism and Theosophy than of ufology. (Not surprisingly, many contactees are present or former Spiritualists or Theosophists.) Contactees, in short, are not the "ordinary" citizens one encounters as UFO witnesses — or as abductees.

Whatever it is that abductees experience, it has a much greater claim to being an aspect of the UFO phenomenon than do the visionary experiences of contactees. Contactee experiences practically never involve either UFOs or occupants that resemble those reported in standard close encounters of the third kind (in which the witnesses are not occultists and in which communication, if it exists, is nearly always limited). Abduction accounts, however, practically always do involve these elements. In addition, unlike most contact experiences, abductions are unsought; they are also terrifying and traumatic — just as other kinds of close encounters are.

The confusion of contactees and abductees is indicative of the wholly inadequate response of European new ufologists to the abduction question. When they are not telling us how irrational we are for taking the phenomenon seriously, they are busy not investigating it personally, and from the security of their armchairs, they are concocting what they like to think of as "psychological" explanations. Most of these (with the honorable exception of the "fantasy-prone-personality hypothesis," well argued in these pages by Basterfield and Bartholomew) are untestable, and none is adequate to explain even most of the elements of the reports. The principal argument, the favorite one of all critics (whether they call themselves debunkers or new ufologists), that abduction stories are the product of confabulation under hypnosis, is demonstrably false, as Thomas E. Bullard concludes after comprehensive analysis of all relevant evidence; see his paper in the new issue of the *Journal of UFO Studies*.

Bullard writes (p. 36), "Weighed and found wanting time and again, hypnosis cannot shoulder nearly as much responsibility for abductions as the skeptics have proposed. None of their appeals to confabulation, influence by the hypnotist, and experiments with non-abductees stand up under a comparative examination. In light of these findings, the burden of proof now drops on the skeptics. They can no longer repeat their old claims as meaningful answers. For any future rebuttals the skeptics must look deeper into the phenomenon itself rather than simply deduce the hazards of hypnotic testimony from scientific studies of hypnosis, or read theoretical interpretations into abduction reports from a safe distance. The skeptical argument needs rebuilding from the ground up."

No mental-health professional who has involved himself or herself in direct investigation of abduction reports thinks the phenomenon is trivial, meaningless or easily explainable. One New York psychiatrist has written a scientific paper, to appear in the psychological literature this year, in which she methodically debunks every "conventional" explanation yet offered for the phenomenon. By now several dozen mental-health professionals, some of them internationally prominent authorities on clinical hypnosis, have quietly involved themselves in the study of a phenomenon that puzzles them as much as it puzzles ufologists, and for the same reasons. Unlike European new ufologists, who are neither psychologists nor direct investigators of the phenomenon, they have not criticized American ufologists for stupidity and gullibility; to the contrary, they are consulting as much with us as we are with them. (CUFOS, for example, is working on an abduction study — in which, among other things, the fantasy-prone-

personality hypothesis will be tested — with a number of Chicago-area mental-health professionals.) Across the country some of these professionals have privately — usually *very* privately — concluded that these phenomena may be just what they appear to be: literal kidnappings by alien beings. It should be noted that these are not individuals who would define themselves as "ufologists." Under the circumstances it would be bizarre indeed if we Americans decided, as Paul Devereux would have us do, that it is beneath our dignity to involve ourselves in abduction research.

We American ufologists are justifiably irked when we see our views on abductions (and other matters) caricatured beyond recognition. Take the matter of the bodily scars some abductees report. It's not just that new ufologists are wont to explain them away with hand-waving assertions (see D. Scott Rogo's remarks on this practice in "Letters"), it's that we Americans, Budd Hopkins in particular, are portrayed as so cretinous that we take practically any scar whatever as proof of an abduction experience. Devereux's tone as he refers to my "Conversation with Budd Hopkins" (*IUR*, November/December 1988) is never less than shocked and appalled; Hopkins' tone in that interview is always calm and reasonable. It may be (or it may not be) that nonetheless Devereux is right and Hopkins wrong about the overall meaning of the abduction phenomenon, but it is undeniably true that Hopkins exercises caution and good sense in judging whether a scar is anomalous or not; see his remarks on pp. 4-5 of our interview. Recently Hilary Evans was glad to announce that he endorses "every word" of Klass' inept *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game* (1988), even though its conclusions and even the basic accuracy of its reporting have been shot to pieces separately by Bullard and Hopkins.

It sometimes seems to me that our European critics are more interested in telling us what is wrong with us as human beings than in demonstrating, with anything other than *ex cathedra* pronouncements, what is wrong with our data. Along with all the personal abuse we get for heeding the Roswell evidence, we get only strange and unhelpful statements such as Russo and Grassino's accusation that we are so backward we "have to resort to ... alleged crashes which took place 40 years ago." (Could they possibly mean that because the purported events occurred 40 years ago they are not important? I think so.) The most peculiar statement of all comes recently from a British ufologist who declares that unless American ufologists can produce *personally* wreckage and bodies, the subject is not worth considering! Then he clinches his case by quoting a former Air Force chief of staff's statement that no "material evidence of the existence of spaceships has been found." I guess that settles it.

Devereux assures us that the extraterrestrial hypothesis is an "appalling mess." His "evidence" is that there are "vying versions of ET contact." So what? The existence of a number of theories (ET, earthlight or whatever) about the UFO phenomenon does not invalidate the phenomenon itself; it just means that our knowledge of it at this stage is sufficiently imperfect to allow for competing hypotheses. In any case, the ETH as conceived by American ufologists, whether ultimately it proves correct or incorrect, is quite consistent. Devereux may see a conflict between Friedman and Hopkins, but Friedman and Hopkins see no such conflict. Both hold that UFOs are piloted by intelligent beings from our galactic neighborhood. These beings are humanoid in appearance. They have a scientific interest in our planet and us (viewing *Homo sapiens*, apparently with neither affection nor hostility, as a lower form of life). That's the American version of the ETH. Right or wrong, it's simple and clean.

It is also consistent with the thinking of astronomers who have researched and reflected on the likely nature and distribution of intelligent life throughout our galaxy. Prof. Michael D. Swords of Western Michigan University, after an extensive literature survey, has written several papers (most recently "Science and the Extraterrestrial Hypothesis" in the *Journal of UFO Studies*, which he edits) which show that the "major hypothesis of ufology is in total congruence with the leading edge of all 'establishment' science observations and theories." That does not mean, of course, that therefore UFOs must be spaceships; but it does mean that ufologists who think visitation by extraterrestrial humanoids is at least theoretically possible are entertaining a scientifically-defensible idea. In short, the case against ET UFOs will have to be argued on other grounds than that it is inherently irrational, impossible or "messy." In the future all critics who attack the ETH on *a priori* grounds will have to address Swords' arguments and the scientific data on which they are based.

None of what I have written here should be read particularly as a brief for the extraterrestrial interpretation of UFO origin, or as an argument that a psychosocial approach to UFO inquiry is without merit. (Only a fool would deny there are psychological, sociological and folkloric dimensions to the UFO phenomenon — but only the foolhardy would, in my view, argue that they are *all* there is to the UFO phenomenon.) The correctness, or falsity, of the various hypotheses is a subject that can be addressed elsewhere. My point is simply that, from the point of view of us pragmatic Americans who are paying close attention to the evidence (and who are not being told by scientific professionals, who are joining us in growing numbers, that our views are misguided), the ETH seems at the moment the approach that begs the fewest questions. We are unlikely to change our minds until we hear better arguments from our critics. ■

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The UFO phenomenon in Hungary

by Karoly Hargitai

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Karoly Hargitai

The following cases have been reported indirectly to me mainly by road-construction engineers whose responsibility is to check road conditions in different parts of Hungary. They are honest, hard-working people with university degrees. Because they prefer to remain anonymous I cannot give you their names. The sightings they reported to me are remarkable.

Some of the phenomena could be of natural origin though there were some that definitely did not belong in this category. Let us examine them one by one.

The Nyirabrany case

Nyirabrany is a small village in northeastern Hungary. One day in September 1972 inhabitants of Nyirabrany were greatly astonished by what they saw in the sky.

While commuting home by train from nearby Debrecen, one of the largest provincial towns in Hungary, workers perceived luminous orange-colored ellipsoids floating high above Nyirabrany. As the workers walked home from the station, the phenomena were still visible in a somewhat cloudy sky. The time was about 8:00 p.m. The luminosity of the orange ellipsoids was of the same intensity as that of the full moon. They formed three rows — there were about seven of them — and the distance between the different phenomena was somewhat smaller than the diameter of each single phenomenon. Neither the individual objects nor the formations in which they were placed moved at all. They seemed glued to their particular places in the sky. The spectacle lasted for about 30 minutes.

The peculiar phenomena appeared again on the following evening and again and again on the three other evenings in a row. They were seen on five occasions altogether.

On the penultimate appearance one of the phenomena disappeared for a while. After five minutes or so it returned and filed itself into its original place in the formation. During this interval the others stayed where they were. This little excursion took place at about 8:30 p.m. After the reappearance of the temporarily lost phenomenon all of the orange ellipsoids appeared within the fraction of a moment of each other.

The UFOs were sighted by at least 10 to 12 persons. They appeared every evening at the same part of the sky west from the village under a 30-degree angle of sight.

The Bekescaba sighting

The following event occurred at Furjes, near Bekescaba, between 1:30 and 2:00 a.m. on October 10, 1986. This was a moonlit night with no wind or clouds. Temperature was about 10° C. It had rained during the preceding days, but no rain fell on the days following the sighting.

Northeast of Furjes, about one or two kilometers away, a very strong light comparable to lightning could be seen. Yet no thunder accompanied it. The curious light phenomenon ended at a 200-300-meter altitude, so it did not come down to earth. The light streak was fairly vertical and it was at least five times as thick as normal lightning.

After the strange "lightning" was gone, a shining bluish, misty phenomenon appeared and it floated for about five or six minutes until it gradually faded away. The eerie mist column had a kind of metallic blue color. Possibly because of a breeze blowing at that altitude, the column broke up into several parts and separated. Each part seemed about 10-30 meters long.

The phenomenon was followed by an unusual odor which could be sensed for 20-30 minutes.

One assumes this phenomenon was natural, and electromagnetic in origin. But it is certainly a most peculiar occurrence.

Jozsa sighting no. 1

Under this heading and also in the following two parts we are going to deal with events which probably have certain common factors and characteristics. As the location is the same and each sighting occurred at approximately the same time, we can suppose that we have the very same phenomenon in all three cases.

On November 25, 1986, the official daily of the Hungarian Socialist Workers' Party *Nepszabadsag* published an article dealing with a strange phenomenon observed in the vicinity of Debrecen. The article was titled "Ball lightning or 'Flying saucer?'" I quote from the first part of the article:

During the night of 22nd of April the ambulance had to carry a man, an inhabitant of the village Hajdunanas, to the Surgery Clinic of Debrecen as the poor man had a dislocation of a shoulder joint. They left the village for Debrecen at 10:00 p.m. As they left Hajdudorog, they perceived a huge luminous sphere. It was at least as large as the ambulance car itself and it was flying above the right side of the road. It had an orange color and seemed to shadow the ambulance car.

Those sitting in the car estimated the huge ball to be a 100-meter distance from them, floating at a 30-40-meter altitude. The sphere was surrounded by a ring and flames appeared on its surface from time to time. Two flames were blazing on opposite sides of the sphere while another one was moving to and fro on its middle.

No sound was heard. The sky was cloudy but there was no rain. No stars could be seen but visibility was good. The sphere followed both the ambulance car and a small delivery truck.

This strange tailing lasted for 15 minutes along the 19-kilometer distance. When they arrived in Hajduboszormeny the sphere suddenly quickened its flight and stopping above a small forest, it slowly descended.

During the landing maneuver it radiated such a bright light that the leaves of the trees could be seen more clearly than in the daytime. Within a short time the light went out and the landscape became enveloped in the normal darkness of a country night.

After the patient received the necessary treatment at the clinic the ambulance left Debrecen to take the man back to his village. On their arrival in Jozsa the three men in the ambulance car again perceived a huge sphere — this time probably an even larger one — with the difference that it had six or seven flames instead of three. The sphere traversed the village at an unbelievable speed and "waited" for the ambulance at the other end of the settlement. It adjusted its speed to that of the ambulance and began to follow it again.

The people inside the ambulance were greatly astonished and too frightened to use their VHF radio transmitter. After some minutes of perplexed hesitation they decided to stop but not get out.

The sphere slowed down its pace to about 5-10 km/hour but did not stop. At that time the witnesses were standing right under an overhead power line. The sphere flew over the line and radiated so much light that the cables could be quite clearly seen. When the ambulance started again and commenced to move with 70 km/hour speed, the sphere began to shadow it again. This second close encounter lasted for about 10 minutes and after its disappearance the phenomenon did not show up again.

The crew of the ambulance did not examine the landing because it is strictly forbidden for them to get out of the car while carrying a patient. When later on they covered the same route they saw that the grass was burning at the small forest where the sphere had earlier landed. This time they got out of the ambulance car and went to the site. The grass was all wet and they were perplexed to see 1 1/2-meter-high flames emanating from the ground. [This phenomenon was certainly due to natural gas oozing out of the soil. In that region this is a common occurrence.]

These were the facts. Then came the explanation.

The writer of the article tried to prove that the phenomenon must have been ball lightning. In fact, ball lightning does not last for two hours. Nor does it behave as this object was reported to behave.

There are a number of credible descriptions of ball lightning. According to these, the size of a ball lightning never surpasses one meter in diameter and is usually much smaller. The men in the ambulance estimated the diameter of the sphere to be about 10 meters. Moreover, lightning balls are of white or bluish-white color. I know of no reports of orange ball lightning. Another fact: ball lightnings, even the small ones, do a lot of dirty tricks and are usually destructive of their environment. Small ball lightnings have been known to rip the tiles from the roofs, break an iron bathtub into pieces, perforate the walls of buildings, explode trees, and melt even a heavy machine gun.

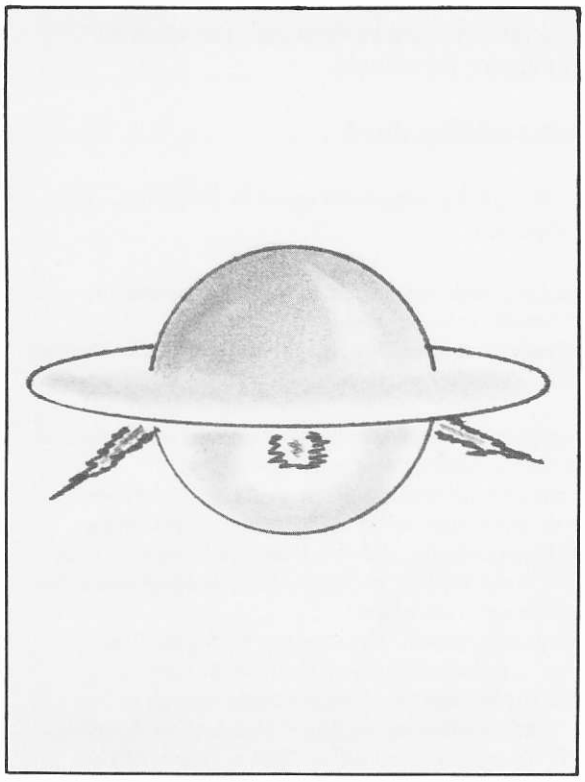
Imagine what a ball lightning of 10 meters in diameter could have done!

Jozsa sighting no. 2

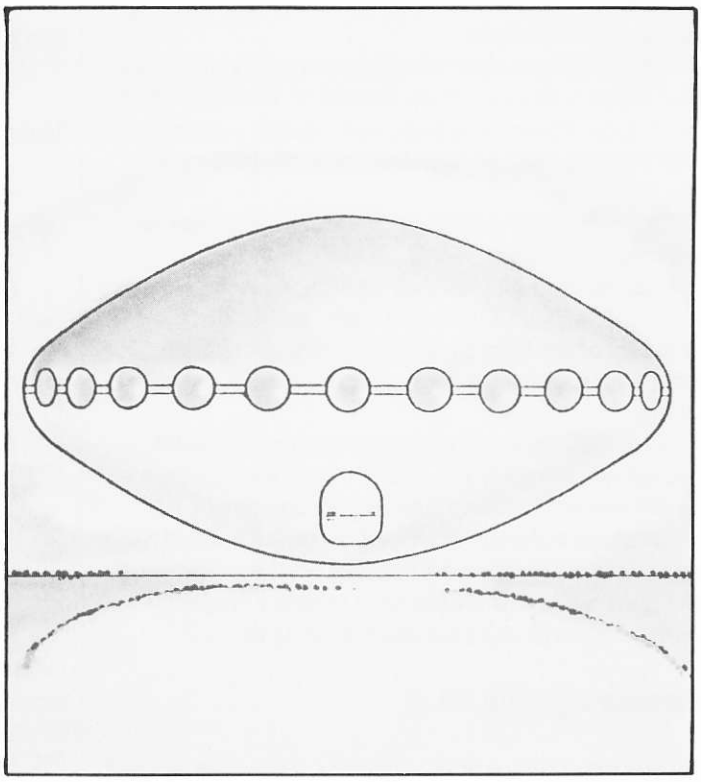
The next sighting took place in the vicinity of Jozsa about eight months later, in late December 1986. A member of the road-maintenance service was driving on the highway connecting Hajduboszormeny and Debrecen when he saw a "trailer with lit-up windows" about 250-300 meters away. It was around 2:30 a.m. An orange light flooded out through the "windows." The "trailer" was parked in the middle of a field which had been tilled the preceding autumn and contained patches of snow.

The somewhat sleepy engineer thought that the trailer might have belonged to the local agricultural cooperative whose members were probably working in the field. But he realized some days later that during that period of time when he saw the trailer no one was working in the area. And because the machine station was in a short 1 1/2-kilometer distance from the field, there would have been no need to station a trailer in the field. Furthermore, there was no farmhouse or any other kind of building near where the "trailer" sat.

There was a high-voltage overhead power line at a



Jozsa, April 22, 1986



Jozsa, January 9, 1987

100-150-meter distance from the place where he observed the "trailer." The 10-meter ball lightning mentioned earlier landed on both occasions — flying toward Debrecen and returning from there — roughly at the same place, at about 1000-1200-meter distance from the site where the "trailer" was parked.

About 1 1/2 weeks later the "trailer" appeared at the same place and in the same time again but this time it was not taken for anything else.

Jozsa sighting no. 3

This third and at the same time most interesting sighting took place on a Friday night, on January 9, 1987. Another member of the road-maintenance service was again on a routine checking tour driving from Hajduboszormeny to Debrecen. At that time he knew nothing about the "trailer" observation; he heard about it only later.

It was a quiet winter night. The sky was cloudy but visibility was reasonably good. The temperature was 20° C. The driver arrived at the same place, and at the same time, where his colleague had seen the "trailer."

Around 2:30 a.m., as he approached the spot where his colleagues had seen the "trailer," he thought he saw a farmhouse 250 to 300 meters from the road in the field. The windows of the "farmhouse" were lit up. When he suddenly realized that in that part of the field there was no farmhouse, he braked his car so that he could get a better look at the object — which to his considerable unease he soon concluded was a UFO. The UFO was sitting meters away from the high-voltage overhead power line between two stacks of straw.

It was 15 meters in diameter and its height was at least half that of its diameter. The UFO was disc-shaped and rounded off at the rim. Through the center line ran a row of circular windows. The witness could see about eight or 10 of them, spaced about 0.7 meters from each other and .08 in diameter. The light emanating from them was of warm, yellow color.

Between the windows grayish-white streaks of light could be seen. Their thickness was about 1/5 the diameter of the windows. Their light intensity was much weaker than that of the light coming out through the windows.

Under the row of windows, on the side facing the road, an opening — a door — could be seen. It stood about 1.5-1.6 meters with a slightly smaller width. The light that came out through the opening was of the same color as that emanating through the windows, although it was brighter. Behind the entrance a kind of floor could be seen. Of a light color, it ascended toward the inside of the vehicle. Transverse ribs could be observed on the floor.

Two entities were seen outside the UFO while another stood right in the entrance opening. They were

wearing dark overalls. The two entities' heads came up to half the door's height.

The eyewitness observed flashes erupting every two to four seconds skyward from the top of the object. The color of these flashes was yellowish, though somewhat whiter than the color of light coming through the windows.

The sight of the entities so frightened the observer that he fled the scene.

At about nine o'clock that morning there was a heavy snowfall. It snowed for several days, and the thick snow covered all of the landing site. Interestingly enough several hundred crows settled on the site after it stopped snowing.

Since then the members of the local road maintenance service have been regularly monitoring the area but have not come across any similar phenomenon.

The three sightings described happened within nine months and this is rather noteworthy. If they appear with such regularity in this region, then people living and working there will certainly meet them again.

Debrecen sighting no. 1

The next sighting in the region took place on August 17, 1987, in Debrecen.

An electric engineer observed a moving spot of light at 9-9:15 p.m.

He realized at once that the thing was decidedly out of the ordinary. It was circular in shape and orange in color. Its size was comparable to that of the full moon when it is on the horizon. He could not estimate its speed. He could follow the flight of the UFO till it disappeared behind the high-rise tenement houses of the city.

The sighting lasted for about 14 to 16 seconds.

The Hajduboszormeny sighting

Six days after the aforementioned sighting, another UFO was seen on August 23, 1987.

The observer saw the flying object west of Hajduboszormeny, between 2:00 and 3:00 a.m. It appeared somewhat larger than a planet in the night sky. It was circular and white.

The object was flying slowly to the north in the direction of the country town of Balmazujvaros. A thin, orange-colored lightbeam coming out of the UFO swept several times between the west and east. Suddenly it "jumped" with a tremendous speed from one place to the other and stopped. This new place deviated from the original direction under 10-15°.

The observer used the word "jump" because his eyes could not follow the enormously rapid movement. At its new position the UFO sweeped again with the lightbeam but this time it remained stationary. This lasted for at least 30 minutes. Then it suddenly disappeared. No motion could be detected. The observer could not estimate the altitude.

Debrecen sighting no. 2

The last sighting happened again in Debrecen. The observer reports:

I went for a walk with my daughter on September 14, 1987, on Monday, in the evening.

The weather was clear, the sky entirely cloudless. The sun shone warm and we had a rather strong wind blowing from the west.

My daughter suddenly became very excited and told me to look up at the sky where there was a "flying log."

I did not look up thinking that it must have been some object blown away from one of the balconies by the strong wind. She kept on staring upward. I became curious — what could it be? It was a UFO. Its shape was cylindrical and it was flying very slowly to the north.

I looked at my watch. The time was 6:05 p.m. The phenomenon was there till 6:08. After three minutes it disappeared without any trace. Interestingly enough it disappeared before reaching the line of clouds at the far away horizon. There was no sound and no kind of light could be seen. The UFO flew at about two kilometers altitude.

The cylindrical shape was rounded off on both tips. When perceived by us it was right over our heads. If it had been a plane we could have seen its wings. Its length was probably eight to nine times that of the diameter. It was slightly glittering in the sunshine, and its color was white. Metallic white.

While observing it, I looked around a couple of times in the street but nobody else seemed to notice it through it was a big object. My daughter, who was six years old, noticed it even without any attention-attracting sounds or lights.

I tried to convince her that what we saw was a plane but she did not believe me, saying, "Daddy, I have already seen many planes but they all looked very different." The UFO was probably a similar one which had been sighted in August 1984 above the village of Ujkigvos.

The sightings described happened in a relatively small area — the vicinity of Bekescaba and Debrecen. It is noteworthy because the data were collected by the members of a small group on the basis of their own experience. The members of the group did not ask people about similar sightings and they did not share their experiences with other people, fearing ridicule and other unpleasantries.

The question arises: how many such and similar flying objects could be swarming in our skies if only a handful of people have seen so many of them in such a comparatively small area and within a relatively short time? ■

***IUR* back issues are available. Send SASE for list and table of contents.**

The Coyne case: correction and update

by Jennie Zeidman

Jennie Zeidman, a longtime UFO investigator, is a member of the CUFOS board of directors.

CUFOS published my *Helicopter-UFO Encounter Over Ohio* in 1979. In the November/December 1988 issue of *IUR* I wrote of finding two additional (albeit indirect) witnesses to that Mansfield, Ohio, event of October 18, 1973, and now I have more information relative to those latest witnesses. The December 1988 measurements were wrong and we must now consider what the corrected figures mean.

When I interviewed Jeanne Elias and her son John, 29, in September 1988 at the CUFOS photo exhibit, Jeanne told of hearing the extremely close helicopter and John told of hearing the helicopter and seeing a distinctive green light on October 18, 1973, a few minutes past 11:00 p.m., at their house southeast of Mansfield. This corroborated the testimony of the four airmen and the family of five in the car, giving a total of 11 witnesses to the event.

Jeanne had marked her house location on my map of north-central Ohio and using that map, I measured that the two sets of ground witnesses were 1.25 miles apart. I computed that at a speed of 90 kts., it took the helicopter 43 seconds to cover this distance. Because Col. Coyne and his crew stated that the green beam was a steady light and the green beam figured prominently in both Elias and other family testimony, I concluded that the green beam therefore persisted for a minimum of 43 seconds. (In my report I had given a median estimated time at eight seconds for closest approach of the object and observation of the green beam, based on the witnesses' subjective accounts.)

On March 30, 1989, I visited the Elias home to reenact my interview with them for a television crew taping a show on UFO research in Ohio. This time I had a finely-detailed map of Richland County and upon reaching the house I realized immediately that Jeanne's previous marking of her house location on the less detailed map was off by 6/10 of a mile.

The distance between the two sets of ground witnesses is now determined to be 1.75 miles. At a helicopter speed of 90 kts., this distance would have been covered in 60.79 seconds and therefore the green beam was seen by the aircrew for a minimum of 60.79 seconds, not 43 seconds as I had previously written.

Coyne had stated that when he went into a descent as an evasive action, his intention was to increase the helicopter speed to 100 kts. But nowhere did Coyne state that the helicopter speed actually increased, as noted on his airspeed indicator. Further, it must be noted that both Eliases stated emphatically that the sound (Jeanne) and sound and light (John) persisted for a long time — they each thought "several minutes" — as opposed to the transitory phenomenon of an aircraft at 90 to 100 kts. passing over a house at low altitude. (John gave no explanation for not jumping out of bed and running to the window to investigate.)

I have therefore elected to use the speed of 90 kts., rather than 100, and I think there is a possibility — even probability — that the helicopter's forward speed may have actually been considerably diminished during this time period — and that the total duration of observation of the object by the crew may have therefore been longer than the previously-estimated 300 seconds. I realize this may also suggest to some researchers that the crew may have experienced a period of unaccounted-for time. They thought the green beam persisted for from five to 10 seconds. At 90 kts. it would have been for about a minute; it could have been for several minutes. Without precision clocking of the helicopter from point A to point B, we will never know.

The actual course of the helicopter must also be reevaluated. The Columbus-to-Cleveland compass heading is 30 degrees. Coyne knew the route well; he had made the trip "a hundred times." Lt. Jezzi, relatively inexperienced and making his first flight with the crew, was at the controls when they departed Columbus. Both Coyne and Jezzi had said that they were "following the lights of I-71 and cross-checking with Mansfield VOR." Although not precision flying, on an essentially CAVU evening with a VFR flight plan, this would be an acceptable navigation procedure.

I had not questioned it before, although I had been aware that at the location of the family in the car, the helicopter was 1.4 miles off a straight-line Columbus-Cleveland course. At the Elias house the helicopter had deviated by 6/10 of a mile. The heading between the two sites is 10 degrees, not 30. Winds were essentially calm; cross-wind "crabbing" was not a factor.

Now the question arises, at what point did the helicopter go off course? Perhaps Jezzi began following I-71 soon after leaving Port Columbus. Perhaps Coyne, who took the controls as the object approached, turned

toward the left as part of his evasive maneuver. (Coyne said their course never varied.) Another thought, equally impossible to substantiate, is that the object "dragged" the helicopter toward the west. I am not proposing any theory, merely mentioning some possibilities.

As my investigation of this case has continued over the past 13 years, I have refined and adjusted my figures as warranted by new information. On May 7, 1978, I suffered a sound rebuke from Philip J. Klass, who presumed that my statement that previous figures were askew was a "euphemism for "in error."'

Yes, my previous figures were in error. And as new information comes to light and I continue to update my findings, it may become evident that the figures I have presented even today may be "in error." But that's what advancement — in science or any other human endeavor — is all about: learning something new and adjusting one's conclusions accordingly. So far my revisions indicate that the Coyne case is even more strange, more complicated, than previously realized. ■

EDITORIAL — *continued from page 3*

Jenny Randles in England. For the most part, her efforts have come to naught. Bill Chalker in Australia has been granted access to the files of the Royal Australian Air Force but has found no evidence of a government cover-up, only some intriguing unexplained cases.

It would not, however, be fair to leave this matter without admitting the existence of what could be labeled an unseemly interest in cover-ups among many American ufologists. Our interest is fueled by the same sociological and psychological forces that generate the paranoia Clark discussed in his editorial. A good paranoid requires a conspiracy against him or her, and Americans have what the late historian Richard Hofstadter called a "paranoid style." Recall the McCarthyism of the early 1950s, or the continuing market for books about the Kennedy assassination, for two especially vivid examples. American ufologists have transferred a penchant for conspiracy into the UFO field, where material for its further development lay ripening like corn in August.

Now, Americans don't have a corner on conspiracy theories, and we certainly don't have the most loony ones floating around. For that we must look to the Middle East. An article in a recent issue of *The Atlantic* gives a variety of examples of the imagination and credulity of the public and media in Arab nations and Iran. One instance of this style of "thought": A bomb not long ago destroyed the van owned by the captain of the naval ship that last year accidentally shot down an Iranian airliner. Most people think this is the work of Iranian agents. But Tehran's media have concluded that the bombing was an FBI plot to demonize Iran!

There truly do exist secret government activities that should concern all of us as American citizens. But that fact does not imply that the main focus of ufology should be conspiracy theories about government involvement. It has been all too convenient for American ufology to head in that direction given (1) the lack of new reports, (2) passage of the FOIA and (3) our fascination with cover-ups. I am a sociologist by training (among other things) and I know of little work that seriously discusses why Americans and Europeans differ in their appetite for conspiracies (although of course conspiracy theories are hardly unknown across the Atlantic). But they do, and that fact explains quite a bit about what has happened in the U.S. this past decade.

Americans are also interested in abduction reports. Part of this fascination can be chalked up to factors discussed above. Only abduction reports have been increasing in the past 10 years; hence it is natural that investigators would focus on them. Also, in a very real sense, if abductions are really the work of aliens, then there is an extraterrestrial cover-up of immense magnitude going on. We may care about what the U.S. government knows but we would much rather know what the aliens are doing to us. If only FOIA extended to the intelligences behind the UFO phenomenon. Our interest in conspiracies is, I think, unconsciously manifested in the focus on abduction reports.

Foreign ufologists may not be conspiracy buffs but sightings have dwindled for them as well. Why haven't they turned to abduction reports as an alternative? To be honest, I don't know, but I'll speculate anyway. First, perhaps abduction reports happen preferentially to Americans. This hypothesis makes no sense if the Europeans are correct concerning the sociopsychological origins of the UFO experience, and I can't imagine that aliens would restrict their experiments to North American subjects. Nor does it make sense if Persinger is right about the tectonic origins of UFOs; fault lines, after all, are everywhere.

But abduction reports might plague Americans more often if their "manufacture" depends on peculiarities of the psyche to which Americans are especially susceptible, such as the boundary-deficit idea championed by Martin Kottmeyer. American ufologists would then receive more reports than their foreign colleagues, but that simple fact would be misrepresented by both sides (Americans discern evidence of alien action; foreign ufologists see proof that American ufologists are misguided).

Another possibility is that the American public is more willing to report its abduction experiences. Perhaps many persons around the globe are having what we know as the abduction experience, but only Americans are courageous (or foolhardy) enough to come forward. The American public seems to have the highest level of belief in the extraterrestrial origin of some UFOs; that belief

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Letters

Those enchanted Americans

To the editor:

I seldom take up space in your magazine, but I hope I may be allowed to comment on three issues raised in the November/December 1988 issue of *IUR*.

First, the editorial, in which there is a complaint about the inadequacy of the psychosocial theories regarding UFOs and close encounters. I can sympathize with this view to a large extent. Psychosocial theorizing is a characteristic of European ufology, particularly British and French ufology. The French mind especially seems prone to a peculiarly Cartesian streak at times. Rationalism *ad absurdum*. But it would also be foolish to deny there *is* a powerful psychosocial element in many UFO cases, and it may well be that the more exotic a UFO case becomes, the more psychosocial elements are involved. Awareness of that possibility is crucial. The real problem with UFO psychosociology is that, as with so many UFO theories, it is taken to ridiculous extremes. I suspect there is deep-seated fear within some of the overzealous proponents of such views (and UFO skeptics in general) that some core phenomenon involved in the whole UFO business really does elude present knowledge, leaving the modern, rationalist world view at least untidy if not awkwardly disturbed.

The second thing that caught my eye was Thomas E. Bullard's comment that "ghost lights can claim only marginal status as UFOs." The sad thing here is that he is correct. And that is an intellectual tragedy, I call "ghostlights" *earthlights* in an attempt to remove them from a dusty and forgotten pigeon hole that few ufologists ever look in, to their great shame, and to emphasize the greater status of the lights as being in fact a vitally important phenomenon.

Earthlights are light phenomena that can dance high in the air, move at speed, hover, "land" (emerge from the ground, indeed), display apparently at whim characteristics of weightlessness and mass, range from inches to yards across, merge with one another, leave physical traces, have electromagnetic (EM) effects. The biological effects of EM fields around such light phenomena, as suggested by Michael Persinger, are far more than theories — they are clinically factual. Mind effects (confabulation, memory distortion *prior to* as well as after stimulus, physical sensations in the reproductive organs, "floating sensations) entirely consistent with reported abduction experiences — and, note well, in some out-of-body and near-death experiences too — can definitely be created by EM stimulation of the cortex. If these lights are not UFOs, can someone define just exactly what then *is* a UFO? Where does an earthlight end and a UFO begin?

How can phenomena like these lights possibly be regulated to a "marginal" role within ufology? I was heavily criticized by some U.S. ufologists for my 1982 *Earth Lights*, a response (interestingly) that does not seem to be accorded the current abduction craze by such people. And yet if we look just at the various ET hypotheses, they do not all add up. Have crashed UFOs and dead aliens been locked up in some shed for 40 years or so? Is the U.S. government secretly working with aliens and covering up its tracks like mad? Are weird ETs really abducting us and cross-fertilizing with us? Who is right: Friedman, Lear, Hopkins? The various ET scenarios of these and others do not meld very well if you seriously look at the claims.

Anyhow, the bad news is that I've been at it again: my *Earth Lights Revelation* (Blanford) is due out in the autumn this year. It is much tougher than the 1982 book, with some important surprises in it. The earthlights case I will be presenting is not surpassed by any other UFO theory, and is more testable than any of them. Thus if ufologists choose to dismiss the importance of earthlights once more, one is entitled to ask: are the ufologists simply indulging in pet theories instead of reacting to accountable evidence?

This brings me to the third item in the issue: the long interview with Budd Hopkins. Oh dear, what are we to say about all this? I love America; my wife and many of my friends are American. I have visited most areas of the USA; so I hope I will not be considered anti-American when I say that to a foreigner America can often seem unbelievably insular, even provincial. To look at TV newscasts in the USA, for example, one could be forgiven for thinking that nothing happens in the world that is not American or does not involve Americans. As someone said, "The U.S. is the largest small country in the world." This really does show in the current incestuous ufological "abduction" craze. To an outsider, it truly feels as if one were passing through Salem at the height of the witch-burning hysteria. Good Lord, people are even looking for marks on their bodies!

Has anyone really read *Intruders*? Has Hopkins? Has everyone forgotten that what was described as being in the backyard of the Kathy Davis home in the early part of the book is an absolutely standard, literally garden-

variety earthlight: "basketball"-sized, giving off light but without "any beam," and partially transparent. I could give you a list as long as my arm of such descriptions from around the world. And what happened when Kathy went out to look for what was causing the light? Precisely what Persinger's EM-field theories predict — blackout, "lost time" (sounds much more dramatic than plain old amnesia, doesn't it?), confabulation. And what did the neighbors see? Phenomena entirely consistent with a small earth tremor, which is exactly what they thought had happened. Even the misty effect Kathy and friends experienced later on in the fateful evening is a well-known occurrence related to seismicity (see Helmut Tributsch's *When the Snakes Awake* [1982]). For the rest of the book we are embroiled in the hypnotic exploration of Kathy's confabulations, and ever-increasing layers of constructs being placed on that and similar material. First principles are quickly subsumed in the welter of the abduction-mania. It is my opinion that phenomena altogether more actual and important are being overlooked in this manner.

Let us look at Whitley Strieber's "visitors" while we are about it. In *Communion* he writes that his beings moved "to a sort of choreography...as if every action on the part of each independent being were decided elsewhere and then transmitted to the individual." He felt they "may be a sort of hive." Compare his descriptions with this: "I wondered if they had individualized life at all, for they moved as if in some orchestration of their being.... If one moved, many bent in rhythm. I wondered were their thoughts all another's...guardian or oversoul." Kind of close, isn't it? It was written by a man called G.W. Russell — in 1918 (*Candle of Vision*). Russell further felt they may be, like a hive of bees, "a single organism with disconnected cells." Russell was a well-known Irish nature mystic, of great intellect and undoubted sincerity. The beings he perceived in the landscape came in moments of "seeing" as he put it, when he caught glimpses of what he termed "supernature." In the Irish terminology of the day, he figured he must be seeing fairies. He had no doubt he was seeing a subtle aspect of the earth Russell went by the pseudonym of "AE" and his writings have been available in the U.S. for many years.

What are we to make of the startling similarity? It seems to me only two options are open: either Strieber came across AE's writings and closely based his ideas of the "visitors" on the descriptions he found there, or, if Strieber's *Communion* really is a true story, as I trust and assume it is, then Strieber is describing similar entities to those by AE. In either case, ET beings are not involved. (Everyone seems to have forgotten that Strieber also did not claim his entities were necessarily ETs.)

It is evident that the whole ETH is in an appalling mess, with vying versions of ET contact. As far as the abduction fad is concerned, it is damaging not only because it is detracting serious researchers (who should know better by now) from wider-ranging research, but also because it promotes comic-strip thinking on the subject of UFOs and stifles serious discussion about other approaches to the UFO problem. I was fortunate, for instance, to place my forthcoming earthlights work when everyone is howling for more abduction manuscripts to cash in on the commercial success of *Communion*.

I urge American ufologists to take a longer pause, a deeper breath, and a closer look at the abduction scenario before they lose themselves for another decade in its enchantment. There is real work to be done elsewhere.

Paul Devereux
Brecon, Powys
Wales

Fantasies and phantom limbs

To the editor:

Keith Basterfield, Robert E. Bartholomew and I share the hope that the fantasy-prone-personality hypothesis will soon be tested experimentally. Nonetheless I take issue with some of the claims they make in their letter in the January/February issue of *IUR*.

I remain unconvinced by their suggestion that psychosomatic factors can explain the scars and other skin marks found on the bodies of some abductees. They say that "the literature on phantom-limb organ pain and conversion hysteria clearly shows that dramatic effects on the body can be caused by the human mind." A statement such as this raises questions about how familiar Basterfield and Bartholomew really are with the relevant literature. I was surprised, for example, to see their assertion that "phantom-organ" pain is nonorganic. What they seem to be referring to is the phantom-limb pain felt by persons who have undergone surgical amputation. The cause of the pain is no mystery and it has nothing to do with the powers of the mind.

When a limb is removed, the axons extending from nerve cells are severed and try to regrow. Because they cannot extend outward, they intertwine into a neuroma. Pain is, of course, felt or recorded in the brain, which then decodes the signal and translates it into the appropriate "localized" sensation. The neuroma exerts pressure on itself and sends a signal to the brain via the spinal column, and the brain produces a mistaken sensation — localizing the pain in the phantom space where the limb once existed. Phantom-limb pain can be deliberately induced, in fact, by thumping the stump.

It is true that phantom-limb pain can persist if the neuroma is removed. The pain can also persist if the spinal cord is transected. But while the mechanism behind this pain is not completely understood, it is the likely result of the massive assault on the central nervous system. It should also be noted that psychological studies

of phantom-limb-pain sufferers have failed to demonstrate any differences between them and nonsufferers.

Basterfield and Bartholomew correctly point out that skin conditions can be exacerbated or produced through hypnosis and conversion hysteria (which is a form of self-suggestion). But little of this information bears on the marks sometimes found on UFO close-encounter/abduction percipients. Most of the skin conditions produced through suggestion result from autogenic control of blood vessels. This explains even the disappearance of warts, which could result from starving the infection (warts are caused by viral invasion of skin cells) or from raising the localized temperature — thereby making the lining of blood vessels more porous and facilitating the capacity for immune cells (neutrophils, monocytes) in the blood to enter tissue and fight infection. The only major exception to this rule is the control or production of hypersensitivity reactions (allergic responses, rashes) which rely on subtle biochemical effects on certain specific cells in connective tissues and certain white blood cells. While perhaps dramatic, the mechanisms behind these phenomena are largely prosaic.

Luckily, skin is extremely resilient and repairs itself readily. That is why few kinks or peripheral cuts cause scarring, which requires extreme damage to produce. The effects created through hypnosis are not nearly this biologically severe and represent harmless blemishing, blistering and bleeding through the skin. Hypnotic suggestion has not been shown to produce permanent lesions on the skin. On the contrary, UFO abductees often display permanent lesions from childhood; these could have been produced only by deep cuts. We also find little scoop marks as if deep skin or tissue samples had been taken. To compare these marks to the peripheral sorts of phenomena seen in hypnosis is like comparing a bee sting to open-heart surgery.

Finally, Basterfield and Bartholomew point to the cure of congenital icthyosis by hypnosis reported in 1952 in the *British Medical Journal*. This report sparked a short-lived fad in which hypnosis was used to treat this terrible condition. (And it *is* terrible. I knew someone who suffered from it and I have seen what it does to the body.) Although a few hypnotists reported minor results, this cure was never replicated and remains a great medical enigma. Nothing like it has been reported since. We should be extremely cautious about drawing conclusions from such a rare and inexplicable case.

D. Scott Rogo
Northridge, California

Whose sophistry?

To the editor:

Thomas E. Bullard's article in January/February *IUR*, "Never to Have Reasoned at All: Robert Basil and the Skeptics' Silence," takes me to task for writing the following sentence in my introduction to *Not Necessarily the New Age: Critical Essays*: "That ufologists have to defend their practice as the study of social pathology is as pathetic as it is sophistic."

I was referring to Bullard's review of Philip J. Klass' book *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game*. I will leave it to Klass to offer a full refutation of Bullard's review (if he cares to do so). Suffice it to say that I found the review unconvincing and wrong-headed, if also occasionally provocative. Klass, in my opinion, showed that evidence for literal UFO abductions of human beings is hopelessly lacking. He also severely criticized the use of shoddy hypnosis to uncover memories of such alleged abductions. Those were his main two points. Why are "abductees" telling the stories they are telling? His book did not claim to provide full answers to that question; so to criticize him for not doing so, as Bullard did, is unfair and illogical.

In fact, I tend to *support* some of Bullard's preliminary answers to that very question. I, too, suggest the possibility that abductions might not represent literal contacts with aliens and that the stories told by "abductees" deserve study. Of course they do — but for reasons of psychology and social pathology, or of literature. Here's why: If you posit that there have been no literal contacts between alien beings from UFOs and humans, then you are studying hallucinations or imaginary visions or delusions or dreams or lies or whatever. You are not studying newly discovered facts about the cosmos that demand that science's entire edifice be restructured. Bullard's approach is no doubt a valid one. Yet it is certainly not this approach that dominates *IUR*, which, while it entertains a number of UFO hypotheses, most fully promotes the hypothesis that UFOs and UFO abductions are — at least in part, at least some of them — *literal* events. Hence my use of the word "sophistic," more to describe the magazine's incoherent, often self-contradictory presentation of the "phenomenon" than Bullard's.

Bullard declares (in his rather long "brief polemic") that skeptics "are honor-bound to dialogue." Yes, they are, and yes, I have. There is a 23-page-long interview with noted ufologist Brad Steiger in *Not Necessarily the New Age*, in which we discuss UFOs and the UFO literature in some depth. It is no surprise that we vigorously challenged each other on a number of points. But this interview was as mutually respectful as it was probing. A number of reviewers have pointed out that this is the kind of tone that pervades the whole collection.

Robert Basil
Prometheus Books
Buffalo, New York

Thomas E. Bullard replies:

Robert Basil's response to my criticisms of his book sheds confusion on several issues:

He asserts that Philip J. Klass limited his attack in *UFO Abductions: A Dangerous Game* to negative criticism of hypnosis and the evidence for literal abductions. Since Klass did not intend to provide a full explanation for abductee reports, according to Basil, my criticisms of him for something he never meant to do are unfair and illogical. Let's be fair, by all means: Klass accounted for abductee motivation in terms of a desire for public recognition and the chance to participate in an exciting paranormal fad, sought the origins of narrative content in well-publicized reports and fictionalized portrayals of abductions, and blamed hypnosis when misused by overzealous true believers for the emotional force and surreal character of the alleged experience. To give credit where it is due, he proposed conventional explanations for just about every aspect of the phenomenon and seems to regard his answer as sufficient to account for the mystery. Basil so grossly underestimates the scope of Klass' argument that it is Klass who should call foul on Basil, rather than Basil on me.

I happen to believe that the evidence does not support Klass' theory. More than just believe, I have offered some facts as proof. The evidence I cite in my review sticks pretty close to what Klass actually says, so I feel that my review is fair. His criticisms of hypnosis are perfectly valid from a theoretical standpoint, but the crucial question here is whether potential dangers become actual in practice. In my book review and to a greater extent in a lengthy paper just published in the *Journal of UFO Studies*, "Hypnosis and UFO Abductions: A Troubled Relationship," I examined the issue of hypnosis in abduction research and found no evidence of rampant misuse. On the contrary, I found good reason to believe that hypnosis is a variable with little bearing on the form or content of abduction narratives. Klass argues that these narratives are full of inconsistencies, when I have found that just the opposite is true over a large sample of cases.

Yes, I criticized Klass on these matters, but not unfairly. His arguments on hypnosis and inconsistencies were very much a part of his case against abductions. I confess that I sometimes addressed issues ignored by Klass. Sometimes I had to pry open the eye he closed on unwelcome evidence, such as the many abductions which have come to light without help of hypnosis. Shortcomings in intentions may not be fair game for criticism, but shortcomings in selection of evidence are prime sport.

My criticism rests on facts. They are neither fair nor unfair, just impartial. Yet they speak louder than faith, and against the skeptical explanation for abductions. Nothing seems illogical about following the evidence where it appears to lead. Basil finds my argument unconvincing and wrong-headed, but still offers no reasons why. Contrary to what he states, I did not take him to task so much for the one critical sentence he wrote as for the whole counterargument he failed to write. He still declines a dialogue over the evidence and its interpretation, but points instead to 23 pages of interview with occult/New Age chronicler Brad Steiger (whom he characterizes as a "noted ufologist") in his book. Now, I like to chew the fat as much as anybody, but I had a scholarly dialogue in mind, a critical assessment of the refutations offered by me and others for Klass' argument, a confrontation of issues and not individuals. The ball is still in the skeptics' court, gathering cobwebs.

At least Basil has now turned 180 degrees from the position he implied in his book and supports the study of abductions, as long as they are matters of psychology, social pathology, or literature. But how do we know what abductions really are? Skeptics are content with armchair solutions and avoid close encounters of even the most distant kind with abductees, but still disparage ufologists' investigations as worthless or worse. In other words the skeptics must admit that no scientific examination of the problem has ever taken place. All we have is a batch of strange testimonies poorly handled. From there Basil seems willing to posit that abductions are not literal accounts of alien contact, then study them as hallucinations, delusions and the like. Anyone from Mr. Spock on down would consider it illogical (and, dare I add, sophistic?) simply to assume that abductions are not what they seem to be, without benefit of unbiased investigation or close attention to any contrary evidence available. Abductions may not shake the foundations of science, but I tremble for the future of science when members of an organization supposedly dedicated to defending rational inquiry seem so little inclined to practice it.

No sooner does Basil let me off the hook for sophistry than he hangs *IUR* for the same sin. This accusation is the most remarkable of all. Taking a quick look through *IUR* issues from 1983 to the present, I found 20 abduction-related articles. Three of these were devoted to case reports or procedural matters, two to criticism of Dr. Alvin Lawson's theories, five to noncommittal studies or speculations, and six to psychological or nonextraterrestrial explanations. Only four of 20 articles, mostly by Budd Hopkins, favored objective alien intervention as the answer to abductions. Only one in four *IUR* abduction articles trumpets the extraterrestrial hypothesis, and each does so in well-modulated tones. More articles have expressed reservations about aliens or argued for subjective solutions. Similar diversity of viewpoints has characterized discussion of such issues as crashed UFOs, MJ-12, and Gulf Breeze. A few minutes spent in reviewing the opinions aired in *IUR* should convince anyone that this journal follows no party line and imposes no orthodoxy on contributors. Of course the critic must be willing to invest those few minutes; but

then, skeptics seldom let facts get in the way of a good prejudice. So much variety looks like freedom and vigor of thought to me, not at all like an incoherent and self-contradictory presentation. True, the consistency of *Skeptical Inquirer* is missing, but so are its monotony and intolerance of dissent. If this is sophistry, give me a double dip.

I suspect that Basil dashed off his letter without imagining that it would be taken apart point by point. I can understand his amazement that anyone would go on at such lengths over a mere attempt to clarify and justify one comment in a lengthy introductory essay. This refutation is less important in itself than the problem it illustrates, a problem Mark Rodeghier discusses with pointed skill in his article "The Compleat Skeptic" (*IUR*, September/October 1988). He complains of skeptics who ignore the literature, remain ignorant of the facts, and refuse to take the measure of their opponents. Basil illustrates these failures only too well. Not all "fringe" subjects are created equal — some of them, such as parapsychology, cryptozoology and ufology, have more substantial intellectual credentials than the daily horoscope and therefore deserve proportionally greater respect, even if the phenomena that are the focus of these disciplines ultimately prove to have conventional solutions. Serious consideration is not tantamount to acceptance. Open-minded, well-informed, well-thought-out inquiry is simply the scientific way to pursue truth. Such inquiry must include dialogue in the same spirit, or else the skeptic will find himself forever walking into a buzz-saw of criticism, an unnecessary and painful eventuality which discredits both the skeptic and the skeptical cause. If you want to play the game, learn the rules.

Mythical circles

To the editor:

I am responding to Jean Sider's remarks in the "Letters" section of the January/February issue of *IUR*.

Points (1) and (7): Sider incorrectly claims that "these sets of several circles occur only in a specific area of southern England." We have many reports of similar (and sometimes identical) circle formations from many nations across the world. In particular we have reports of

- a ringed circle at Castions di Zoppola, Italy (August 1985); a photograph is reproduced in BUFORA's book *Phenomena* (1988);
- a ringed circle with three outer satellites at Oadby, Leicestershire, England (June 1988) — more than 100 miles from the area of greatest concentration — which was subject to a full case investigation by BUFORA, ASSAP, Skyscan, IUN and LUFOIC-NUFON;
- a single circle at Vienne, Isere, France (June 1984);
- a double-ringed circle at Twywell, Northamptonshire, England (July 1985);
- two single circles near Malton, North Yorkshire, England (July 1985).

Even if none of these reports existed, this would *still* not necessarily imply that there was form of "intelligence" behind the phenomenon, as Sider implies.

Points (2) and (3): If official meteorological agencies were accepting the circles as meteorological in origin, Terence Meaden of the Tornado and Storm Research Organization would not need to propose an *unrecognized* vortex mechanism to account for them.

Point (4): This seems to be an admission that whirlwinds can create circles.

Point (5): The rings that surround some circle formations are created by thin contra-rotating sheaths which are known to surround some vortices (see, for example, William R. Corliss' *Tornados, Dark Days, Anomalous Precipitation* [1983], pp. 155-56). Accounts exist of vortices maneuvering in multiples (*Trombes et Cyclones* [1876]).

Point (6): Untrue. John Snow, associate professor of meteorology at Purdue University, is happy to support Dr. Meaden's vortex theory: "Given what is known about flow around obstacles and the frequent occurrence of circles in apparent association with hills and other topographic features, I support the hypothesis that the circles are produced by some form of vortex" (private communication).

Point (8): On the contrary, Meaden's theory *must* be tenable because he has demonstrated that characteristics of vortices match characteristics of the circles. For a more detailed description of this process, see *Journal of Transient Aerial Phenomena*, Vol. 5.

Point (9): It is not for me to judge whose research is "fuller than Fuller's." History will be the judge of who is right and who is wrong. I look forward to reading the "numerous strange clues" mentioned by Sider.

Since submitting my article "Mystery Circles: Myth in the Making" (*IUR*, May/June 1988), I have learned of further examples of vortices' creating circles and these will be reported in future articles. Meaden's theory has been published in part by *Weather*, the journal of the Royal Meteorological Society (Vol. 44, No 1, January 1989). We stand by our case.

Paul Fuller
British UFO Research Association
Romsey, Hampshire
England

Gulf Breeze: a second opinion

To the editor:

In his letter in the September/October 1988 issue of *IUR*, Ed of Gulf Breeze challenges his critics to replicate his photos using trick photography. Speaking as one such critic, I admire Ed's suggestion as a rhetorical and strategic device but reject it as a waste of time and energy. We would only end up with even *more* photos to argue inconclusively about.

What *is* needed is a thorough, impartial scientific analysis of *Ed's* pictures, as urged by Richard Hall and Willy Smith in December 1988 *MUFON UFO Journal* as well as in *IUR*'s May/June 1988 editorial, the one Ed enjoyed so much. In it you wrote that "before ufology commits itself, it must insist on a second, wholly independent photoanalysis, preferably done by someone who has no position in the matter.... Two thorough, competent photoanalyses coming to the same (positive) conclusion would constitute the sort of evidence ufologists can — and should — take to the scientific community."

I urge CUFOS to work energetically to bring about this needed second photoanalysis, using its newly established rapport with Ed.

I challenge Ed and his supporters (Maccabee, Hopkins, Ware, Andrus, et al) to make the original photos available to a panel of scientists competent to settle the question of their authenticity...*before* the book comes out. Is Ed the real thing or the greatest waste of time and energy to afflict ufology (and me) since Adamski? Let's find out.

Zan Overall
Van Nuys, California

EDITORIAL — *continued from page 18*

might be translated into action after an abduction experience. A contributing factor may be the unwillingness of foreign investigators to seriously consider abduction reports, creating a vicious circle. Nobody reports one because the experience is not taken seriously, but no one takes the experience seriously because it is not reported — and so on.

My purpose has not been to defend the position taken on abduction reports by many of my colleagues and, I am sure, *IUR* readers. I am, in fact, in some sympathy with the European view on abductions, which is why I have been spearheading a research project to better understand the persons who report abductions. American ufology is not, fortunately, characterized by only viewpoint on this, or any, subject. The same is true for ufology in Europe, Australia or South America.

My own critique of American research applies equally well to that of our overseas colleagues. The quality of data in ufology is, for the most part, poor. We all pay lip service to this fact but then ignore it when it comes to theorizing and applying the data to test our ideas. No one knows what are the causes of the UFO phenomenon or, specifically, of abduction reports (unless, of course, some governments do; my conspiratorial side is showing). And I contend that the current state of the data is such that we cannot use it to separate plausible, alternative theories. The abduction reports that we have in the files do not rule out any serious theory about the experience, and that is the crux of the matter. Science proceeds by ruling out alternatives; ufology has not yet progressed to that stage.

I like to think of myself as a mid-Atlantic ufologist, able to draw on the ideas and work of all researchers. I am enough of a European to become frustrated with Americans' insistence on the importance of cover-ups and alien abductions, and enough of an American to find the esoteric ideas of Europeans to be so much untestable fluff. We need a middle ground, and the sooner work toward that goal begins, the better. It can be done by American ufologists, but only if an understanding is gained of the peculiar motivations and circumstances that constrain and direct our investigations. —
Mark Rodeghier

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